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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

LEGAL AID'S WORKER JUSTICE PROJECT EXPANDS TO QUEENS

(QUEENS, NY) – The Legal Aid Society announced the expansion of its [Worker Justice Project](#) to Queens today - an initiative to combat discrimination faced by workers with arrest or conviction records living in New York City. Every day employers and licensing agencies unfairly deny qualified individuals the opportunity to work because of pending charges, past convictions, and even sealed or dismissed cases. This discrimination prevents countless New Yorkers from maintaining financial stability and supporting their families—and further disenfranchises people of color already subjected to discriminatory employment practices and the racist administration of criminal justice.

The Worker Justice Project advises Legal Aid's Criminal Defense Practice staff on the employment consequences of criminal case dispositions in order to minimize harm to clients' job opportunities. The Project also enforces the rights of workers who are unlawfully denied jobs or licenses because of arrest or conviction records by representing workers in administrative proceedings, pre-litigation advocacy, and affirmative litigation. Finally, the Project challenges government policies that create barriers to employment and advocates for legislative solutions to effect systemic change.

The Project hired Megumi Saito to lead Queens efforts, joining staff attorneys Melissa Ader and Joshua Carrin who currently work out of Legal Aid's Manhattan and Brooklyn trial offices, respectively, as well as legal fellow Caroline Lowry and paralegal case handler Tiffany Pesante.

Megumi first joined The Legal Aid Society in 2010 as an intern while attending the City College of New York. During this time, she had the privilege of contributing towards the early years of

what is now the Exploitation Intervention Project of CDP. She attended the University of Wisconsin Law School where she quickly found her place in the Frank J. Remington Center's criminal defense clinics.

Megumi provided legal services to many Remington Center clients as a student attorney, including helping one client vacate his felony conviction after conducting a post-conviction hearing. Megumi returned to The Legal Aid Society in 2014 as a trial attorney in our Queens Criminal Defense Practice. For the past five years, she has provided comprehensive legal services to clients in criminal and supreme court. She is excited to join Melissa, Joshua, Caroline, and Tiffany in the Worker Justice Project. Megumi will be sitting in the Queens CDP office.

“The Worker Justice Project provides crucial and life-changing services to New Yorkers with arrest or conviction records by helping them fight discrimination and break down unjust barriers to employment,” said **Tina Luongo, Attorney-In-Charge of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society**. “All New Yorkers who have come in contact with the criminal legal system should be afforded the opportunity to be productive members of their community, and we're proud to now have these critical legal services available for Queens residents.”

Contact the Worker Justice Project at WorkerJustice@legal-aid.org or 888-663-6880.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 140 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. <https://www.legalaidnyc.org>